COMIC SHOP NEWS

182

Classic Girls is No Trouble!

From

A Comics Specialty Outlet

Trouble With Girls ™&©1990 Jacobs & Jones. Used with permission.

Adventure Comics Re-A.R.M.s

Adventure Comics' first miniseries based on Larry Niven's Gil Hamilton stories, ***A.R.M.,*** has been so successful that even before the first adventure is completed, a second Gil Hamilton A.R.M. story is slated for miniseries treatment. ***The Defenseless Dead,*** an adaptation of a novella by Niven, is slated to begin in February; it features the further exploits of an agent whose telekinetic arm allows him to reach through any substance, so long as he is within "arm's" length.

The Defenseless Dead of the title are the frozen dead who had themselves cryogenically preserved in hopes of being thawed and cured in the future--or in hopes of having their investments make them incredibly wealthy. Unfortunately, the future doesn't particularly want these "corpsicles," since it has a severe enough population problem already.

"The 'corpsicles' had it all figured out," Adventure Comics editor-in-chief Chris Ulm said. "Whether they were victims of an incurable disease or just wanted to get rich, the solution was obvious--sleep the years away and let the future solve their problems. There's only one catch...the future doesn't want them to wake up."

Why? Because the citizens of the future are in dire need of transplant organs, and they see the "corpsicles" as an ideal source! "If this so-called 'Freezer Bill' passes, corpsicle heirs Charlotte and Holden Chambers will inherit an extremely large sum of money, making them prime targets for a kidnapping by organleggers," Ulm said.

The Defenseless Dead brings Gil Hamilton onto the scene to save the "corpsicles" and reveal the true motives behind the scheme--but in order to do so, he has to stay alive himself, and it doesn't appear that his adversaries are eager for that to happen.

A.R.M. ™ &©1990 Larry Niven

"We're very excited about ***The Defenseless Dead,***" publisher Dave Olbrich said. "This miniseries is the latest addition to our line of quality science fiction adaptations that include the works of such well-known authors as Hary Harrison, Keith Laumer, William F. Nolan, and, of course, Larry Niven. The audience for the science fiction genre is a huge, growing, and intensely loyal segment of the public. There is a potentially enormous crossover appeal between comics and mainstream science fiction--after all, the top five video rental champs of all time include four science fiction films and ***Batman.***"

Adventure hass called on the same team who created the first Gil Hamilton series, ***A.R.M.,*** to handle the honors on ***The Defenseless Dead.*** Once again, Bill Spangler will script the adaptations, while Terry Tidwell and Steve Stiles handle the art.

The Defenseless Dead #1, the first issue of a three-issue miniseries, is scheduled for February release; it is priced at $2.50.

by Kim B. Pearson

Elektra Gets Deluxe Treatment

The long-awaited ***Elektra Lives Again*** graphic novel by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley is scheduled for release this month--but you'll have to wait a couple of extra months for the deluxe limited edition version of this landmark book.

Graphitti Designs--the same company responsible for the packaging and design of Marvel's hardcover--will be offering a 2500-copy limited edition of the graphic novel, signed by Frank Miller; each copy will have a new signature plate and a full-color section featuring artwork not seen in the final Epic version of the book. If you're interested in this hardcover, talk to the folks at your local comic shop; however, we'll warn you right now that copies of this book are going to be in very short supply. With only 2500 copies in print, and demand likely to exceed that tenfold or more, ***Elektra Lives Again*** is going to be a most highly sought-after book.

Elektra ™ &©1990 Marvel Comics

COMIC SHOP NEWS™

Lester Girls Has Busy Winter Planned

Lester Girls' many fans may be disappointed to hear that ***The Trouble With Girls*** is going bi-monthly--but maybe they'll cheer up when they realize that they're actually going to see more of Lester on the comics racks than ever before, with three different Girls titles slated to appear this winter and more on the way for the spring.

The Trouble With Girls will continue with the same sort of zaniness ***Girls*** fans have come to expect from Jacobs and Jones, but the emphasis will be on shorter adventures; ***Trouble With Girls #31*** will have Lester and Apache Dick donning superhero togs in a wacky attempt to become Punisher-style urban vigilantes, while ***Trouble With Girls #32*** gives the inside scoop on Lester Girls' origin. Tim Hamilton and Marvin Mann will handle the art honors.

Lester Girls, a three-issue bi-monthly limited series that began last month and continues through the winter, sends Lester in search of his father. This action-packed series will pave the way for the adult ***Lizard Lady*** miniseries set to debut in the spring.

And of course, the original exploits of Lester Girls are being reprinted in no-ads editions in Eternity's ***Classic Girls***. Shot from the original artwork, these reprints feature new covers by a variety of comics talents, including Paul Gulacy and Mark Badger.

1991 will bring even more Lester Girls miniseries, graphic albums, and special projects--provided Jacobs and Jones can find time to fit comics writing in around their busy scriptwriting chores for the ***Trouble With Girls*** film project...

by Kim B. Pearson

Batman & The Chemical Syndicate: An Explosive Mixture In *Detective 627*

When Batman first appeared in the pages of the classic, ultra-valuable ***Detective Comics #27***, he took on "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate." When Batman appears in ***Detective Comics #627,*** his 601st appearance in the title, he'll once again take on the Chemical Syndicate--or more specifically, he'll take them on four different times within this comic book's eighty pages!

Detective #627 will reprint the first Bill Finger-Bob Kane Batman story; it will also reprint the Mike Friedrich-Bob Brown-Joe Giella retelling of the story that first appeared in the 30th anniversary issue of ***Detective Comics*** in 1969. Following these two reprints will be two modern retellings of the story, one by the team responsible for ***Detective Comics*** (Marv Wolfman, Jim Aparo, and Mike DeCarlo) and the other by the team responsible for ***Batman*** each month (Alan Grant, Norm Breyfogle, and Dick Giordano).

Detective #627 will also include a text piece by editor Denny O'Neil. Norm Breyfogle will paint the cover for the issue, which is inspired by the Batman cover for ***Detective #27. Detective #627***, priced at $2.95, is slated for February 7th release.

by Cliff Biggers

Batman ™ &©1990 DC Comics

NEWSBRIEFS

MARVEL GOES FOR THE GOLD

CSN has already told you about Marvel's reprinting of the first three installments of the X-Tinction Agenda in gold editions; now another title has earned second-printing gold-edition status. ***Fantastic Four 347***, the first part of the three-issue "new Fantastic Four" storyline by **Walt Simonson and Art Adams**, is being reprinted in a gold edition this month. In spite of phenomenally high initial orders for the book, reorder demand was so strong that Marvel felt that a second printing was necessary to give fans a chance to enjoy this tale featuring the Hulk, Spider-Man, Ghost Rider, and Wolverine as the new FF.

MAGE ON HOLD

Matt Wagner, creator of ***Mage***, gave *CSN* a quick phone call recently to announce that the Comico edition of the reprinted ***Mage*** series that *CSN* recently told its readers about won't be appearing after all; Comico no longer has the rights to that material, Wagner said. He does assure readers that a collected volume of the ***Mage*** series will appear in the future, but he didn't give any more information on it yet. As soon as a publisher and a release schedule is available, *CSN* will let you know.

FOGLIO MONKEYS AROUND WITH ANGEL & APE

Phil Foglio, most recently seen on the 1989 ***Plastic Man*** series, is back at work at DC again--and this time, he's turned his writer/artist talents (augmented by the inking skills of **Keith Wilson**) to a rather obscure 1960's title, ***Angel and the Ape***. This is the story of a private investigator team, an attractive, savvy woman and her muscular male sidekick. So what's the gimmick? Well, the title says it all--because Sam Simeon, the partner of the pulchritudinous Angel O'Day, is really an ape--a talking ape!

Well, at least he was an ape. That's the problem, you see: in this new four-issue limited series, Sam has been turned into a human, and he can't get anyone to help him! The only person who'll listen to him is Angel--but she enlists some superhero aid in the form of the Inferior Five (after all, Athena, aka Dumb Bunny, is Angel's cousin).

If talking apes are involved, you know that Grodd can't be too far away; in fact, Super Gorilla Grodd is hoping to enlist Sam's aid to wrest control of the Earth away from humans and into the much larger simian hands of Grodd's minions. ***Angel And the Ape #1***, a standard-format $1 comic, is scheduled for January 31st release.

AESOP REVISITED

Fables have been used for millennia to teach moral lessons; the Indians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans--all made use of fables to entertain and educate. Aesop's Fables have been particularly famous; his simple tales have survived today and have inspired books, films, and now a comic book. ***Aesop's Fables 1***, the premiere issue of a new series written and edited by **Charles Santino**, takes a new look at Aesop's fables. Santino is joined by such artists as **Rick Geary, John Caldwell, Peter Kuper, Shary Flenniken, Val Semeiks,** and others. The first issue adapts "The Ant and the Dove," "The Bear, the Beetle, and the Crow," "The Dog at the bridge, and "The Wasp and the Snake." Fantagraphics feels that ***Aesop's Fables*** "will appeal to the classics illustrated audience, as well as fans of all the cartoonists included--and is a great new general-audiences title as well!" Each issue of the bi-monthly series will be priced at $2.50; the first issue should reach comic shops in December.

Aesops Fables™ &©1990 Fantagraphics

DORMAN'S GOT 'EM COVERED AT MALIBU

Popular comics cover artist **Dave Dorman** (you've seen his work on ***Dark Horse Presents, The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told***, and other hit projects) has recently signed an agreement with Malibu Graphics to provide full-color painted covers for a variety of comics published by Malibu's Aircel, Adventure, and Eternity Comics lines. Dorman's first work for Malibu was a cover for ***Ape Nation*** (the cover has been prepared, although the book itself won't reach comic shops until next year); both sides were happy with the artwork and the business relationship, so a long-term contract was easy to negotiate. "As a creative director, it's very comforting and exciting to know that I have someone as talented, versatile, and professional as Dave Dorman signed on with us for the long term," **Tom Mason** of Malibu said. Dorman said, "I appreciate the creative freedom that I've found at Malibu. They've given me the opportunity to expose different facets of my artwork that the general public hasn't seen before." The general public will have a chance to see some of these new Dorman paintings on ***Ape Nation***, the Planet of the Apes/Alien Nation crossover book scheduled for February 1991 release from Adventure; ***Merlin #2***, a January release from Adventure; and ***Carmilla #1***, a February release from Aircel. More covers will be forthcoming--and *CSN* will let you know about 'em!...

Angel & The Ape™ &©1990 DC Comics

Project Newman™ &©1990 Legacy Comics

THIS NEWMAN ISN'T NAMED ALFRED E...

Project: Newman #1, the premiere title from Legacy Comics, is scheduled to reach comic shops in January '91. This title deals with a mercenary named David Kane who changes his civilian identity at the same time he adopts the superhero identity of Newman. Legacy describes it as "a fast-paced, tough dialogued series that no true adventure buff will want to miss out on." The first issue is priced at $2; with the second issue (which tells Newman's origin), the price drops to $1.75.

TALK ABOUT FULL CIRCLE!...

There's no denying that Superman is the character who can be credited for starting the superhero boom. When **Siegel** and **Schuster** created their Man of Steel, however, they weren't operating in a vacuum; they've previously acknowledged that their creation was inspired, at least in part, by **Philip Wylie**'s classic novel ***Gladiator***. While the novel has been adapted into comics form previously as part of a black-and-white magazine, Gladiator has never been featured in a comic book of its own.

Some sixty one years after the debut of Wylie's novel, Eternity Comics will release a Gladiator comic book. This adaptation will present the story of Hugo Danner, an average human endowed with superhuman abilities because of a formula developed by his father. Before the concept of "revisionist superheroes" ever came about--in fact, before the archetypal elements of super-heroism were ever established--Wylie offered readers an insightful look at the benefits (and problem) inherent with super-powers. "We've wanted to do ***Gladiator*** for quite some time," Eternity publisher **Dave Olbrich** said. "This is a more than welcome addition to our growing line of successful titles." Eternity has not chosen a creative team for the new book yet--but *CSN* will let you know as soon as they do.

JUST IN CASE YOU ARE CURIOUS (YELLOW)

The Yellow Kid, Eclipse's massive $49.95 reprinting of the first comic strip, was initially scheduled for December release. However, don't blame your local comic shop if you don't find it on the racks this Christmas season after all. Eclipse has closed a deal to simultaneously release the book in several different international editions sometime in the summer of 1991. "We apologize for the delay, but this arrangement will allow us to bring out an even better publication," Eclipse said."

MAYBE IT SHOULD COME IN A TRASH BAG...

Kitchen Sink's World's Worst Comics Awards #2, which features the fans' choices as the worst comic book of 1990, also includes the Top Ten Worst Comics of the Past 25 Years, the Worst Series, the Lifetime Underachiever Award, and more. Just to make sure that no one sneaks a peek at the winners ahead of time, Kitchen Sink is shipping each copy of ***World's Worst Comics #2*** in a sealed plastic bag. **Jim Schumeister and Rich Larson** are your hosts for these non-awards; be sure to look for this one in January, just so that you can see if any of your favorites get pegged. ***World's Worst Comics Awards #2*** is priced at $2.50, and is suitable for fans of all ages.

World's Worst Comics™ &©1990 James Schumeister & Rich Larson

TURTLES COME OUT OF THEIR SHELLS

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are set to blitz the theatres again in 1991; New Line Cinema has plans to release ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Secret of the Ooze***, their second live-action film, on March 22, 1991. The film is scheduled to open in 2500 theaters nationwide; this should mean a renewed round of Turtles interest across the nation. Look for a comic book adaptation of the film to appear in comic shops at about the same time the movie debuts.

SPIDER-MAN MEETS LOGAN THE GRIM

Okay, ***Spider-Man #1-5*** featuring the Lizard and Kraven set comic book sales records. Then **Todd McFarlane** decided that the only way he could follow up the phenomenal popularity of that storyline was to guest-star Ghost Rider in a two-parter in ***Spidey 6 & 7***. So what can he do for an encore after these two mega-popular storylines? Would you believe a four-parter guest-starring Wolverine? You'd better believe it--because it's true, and it's happening in January through April of '91!

"It's no secret fans love Todd's version of Wolverine," **Kurt Busiek** of Marvel said, "and it's no secret Todd loves drawing him; now he gets to write for him as well!" The four-parter is set in Wolverine's home territory of Canada; it will also give fans their first glimpse of McFarlane's rendition of The Wendigo.

Spider-Man #8, the first installment of the four-part story, is scheduled for January 17th release.

COMIC SHOP NEWS
Editorial Office:
2339 Milstead Circle
Marietta, GA 30066
fax (404) 973-6949
Business Office:
931 Forest Park Lane
Suwanee, GA 30174
(404) 339-7446
Editors
Cliff Biggers & Ward Batty
Publisher
ParaGraphics
Printing
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Acworth, GA
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NEWSBRIEFS

WILL COMICS FANS PREFER HANES?...

Rob Hanes *almost* made his first comics appearance a couple of years back–but that was when Renegade, the first publishers for the title, went out of the comics business. Now ***Rob Hanes*** has found a new home–WCG Comics–and he's heading for the comic shops in January.

Rob Hanes ™ &©1990 Randy Reynaldo

Randy Reynaldo, the writer/artist of ***Rob Hanes,*** compares his character to a grown-up ***Jonny Quest;*** he's a private-detective son of a wealthy family--and they're none too happy with his choice of avocations. Reynaldo uses the detective concept as an opportunity to take Hanes all over the world–and into a variety of storylines. "Planned for future issues, for example, are romantic comedies, spy thrillers, a sci-fi tale, a super-hero parody, sports stories, and even an old-fashioned drawing room mystery with gothic overtones....I want to have the freedom to take Rob wherever I want and put him in a wide variety of situations," Reynaldo said.. Each issue of ***Rob Hanes*** is priced at $2.50.

GLUM NEWS FROM SPACE FUNNIES

It's a tough comics market out there, as many smaller publishers are discovering. **Robert Brosch**'s Archival Photography, the publishers of ***Basil Wolverton's Space Funnies #1,*** have been forced to cancel plans for a second issue of the Wolverton title; the book was incredibly expensive to produce, since Brosch insisted on the highest possible reproduction quality.

While ***Space Funnies #2*** is cancelled, Brosch adds that "we do plan on continuing our Color Collector's Guide series"; ***CSN*** will keep you updated on that project.

YOU MAY WANT TO GET IN LINE NOW...

Spider-Man #7, featuring the finale of the Ghost Rider-Spider-Man tale by **Todd McFarlane,** is slated for release on December 20th--and you can be sure that copies are going to be hard to find by Christmas Eve, what with all the fans clamoring for any appearance by Ghost Rider (not to mention fans who are clamoring for any artwork by Todd!). This finale also features fan-favorite villain Hobgoblin--as if this book needed another asset...

By the way, Ghost Rider is keeping very busy in December: he's also appearing in ***Thor #429*** (where he and Thor battle Ulik), ***Marvel Comics Presents*** #69 and #70 (where he teams up with Wolverine), ***Fantastic Four #349*** (where he's part of the new Fantastic Four, along with Hulk, Spider-Man, and Wolverine)--and of course, he drops in for a little action in his own title that month as well!

Zot! ™ &©1990 Scott McCloud

GENE HACKMAN IS NOT A PART OF *THIS* CONVERSATION...

Oh, sure, we've had issues of comics where it *seemed* like characters talked for an entire storyline–but ***Zot #35*** is the first comic that readily admits that all that will happen within its pages is "The Conversation." This conversation takes place between Zot and Jenny--and the subject is sex. According to Eclipse, this story is "sure to raise a few eyebrows. The issue is not 'R' rated by any means, but it does deal honestly and in depth with a subject virtually all teenagers have to face sooner or later–usually sooner." Eclipse assures fans that there is no nudity in the issue–just a serious and mature conversation. Look for it in late January, courtesy of **Scott McCloud.**

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Marvel originally said that it would only offer its PVC figures once and that when the initial run sold out, the figures would be unavailable–but fan and collector demand for some of the initial figures has been so strong that Marvel has been forced to modify that plan and cast a new run of four of its most popular figures.

The *Wolverine, Spider-Man,* and *Captain America* figures from the initial set of figures will be made available once again, along with the *Thing* figure from Marvel's second offering. Each figure will be priced at $3.99; don't look for them in comic shops until June of '91, though, since it takes so long to cast and hand-paint all those tiny superheroes...

A NEW REALITY FOR ANIMAL MAN

Animal Man #33, scheduled for January 31st release, will introduce **Animal Man**'s new creative team to readers of the popular book. Writer **Rick Veitch** (who was a fan-favorite when he penned ***Swamp Thing*** a while back) and artist **Steve Dillon** (famous for his work on a variety of UK comics) will take over the book.

To start with, they resolve Buddy's reality problems. He's once again a stuntman, and he's re-establishing his family ties. Everything's not perfect in Buddy's world, though; for one thing, the animals in the neighborhood seem to be turning up dead. And what about that strange new neighbor?...

You can join Buddy in trying to figure out what's going on beginning with ***Animal Man #33.***

STOCKING STUFFERS
BATMAN: A DEATH IN THE FAMILY
BATMAN: GOTHAM BY GASLIGHT
BATMAN: A LONELY PLACE OF DYING
BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE*
BATMAN MOVIE ADAPTATION
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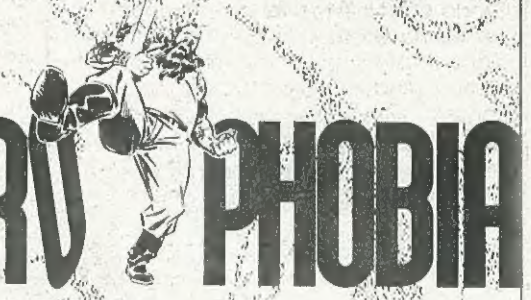
* A madcap holiday TALE !



KLAUSTROPHOBIA

from MIKE BARON, JOHN CALIMEE, and BILL REINHOLD

on SALE now!

BADGER #70

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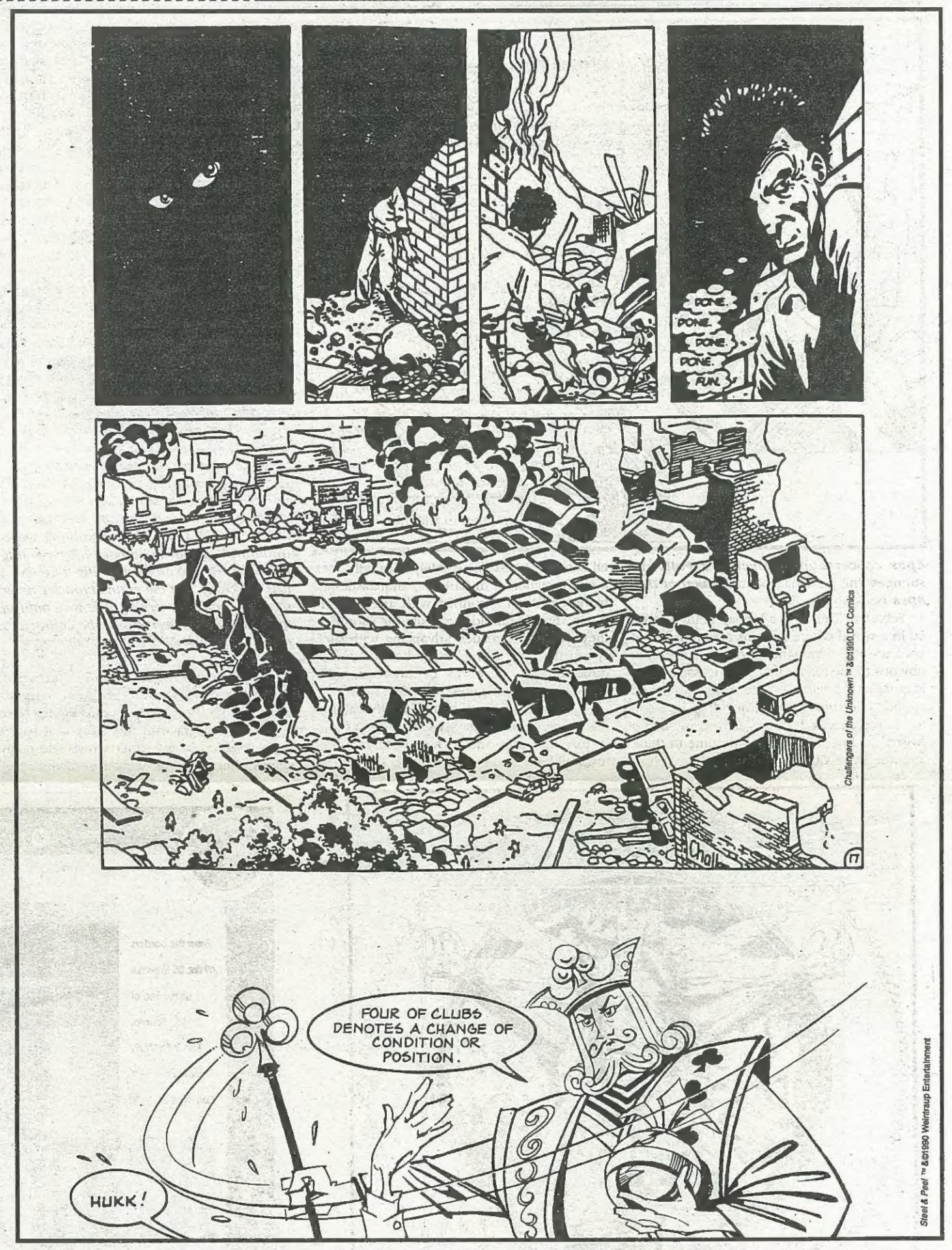
FIRST

CSN PREVIEWS

Give & Take
by Cliff Biggers & Brett Brooks

Each month, Cliff Biggers (in standard type) and Brett Brooks *(in italic type)* focus on some of the more noteworthy comics scheduled for release within the next month. Usually, comics reviewed in ***CSN*** are not yet available on the stands--which means that you haven't missed 'em yet! If you are interested in titles reviewed herein, you might want to talk to the friendly folks at your local comic book shop--and tell them that you heard about it here! Now, on with the reviews...



It's flashback month insofar as reviews are concerned; we're looking at (a) a comic book inspired by an extremely popular 1960's television show, (b) a comic book based on a concept from a hit 1960's science fiction film, and (c) a revitalized title whose earlier comics incarnation began in the early days of the Silver Age renaissance.

First, the television show...: If you didn't grow up in the 1960's, then the name ***The Avengers*** might evoke memories of the Marvel super-group title and nothing else. For those of us who grew up in that era, though, ***The Avengers*** is equally well remembered as the stylish British television series starring Diana Rigg (later replaced by Linda Thorson) and Patrick MacNee that ran on ABC from 1966 to 1969 (even if you didn't see the series initially, you can still relive the moment: A&E is currently running The Avengers in rerun on A&E at 6 p.m. EST Monday-Saturday).

I think that Cliff is making another swipe at the fact that I don't get A&E on my cable service, and how much this upsets me. I have always been a fan of **The Avengers***--particularly the Diana Rigg episodes, which is true of most fans of this cult TV classic. So it really is no surprise that when Eclipse decided to present a comics version of the show, they drew upon those episodes for their source material.*

The main characters of the book— which is being called ***Steed and Mrs. Peel*** *for copyright purposes— are John Steed and Mrs. Peel (or was that obvious?). There is something wonderful about the interaction between these two characters that creates a chemistry of jubilance. I love the snappy banter and light hearted heroics that these to undertake. I even find the times when the world is threatened by all-too-real dangers, and all-too-grisly murders to be fun. I don't know why. I'm not normally prone to psychotic behavior, I just think that it's that already mentioned chemistry between Steed and Mrs. Peel. John Steed the proper Englishman who really isn't, and Mrs. Peel (always Mrs. Peel— though we never do see Mr. Peel) the tough, sharp eyed legwork, who work together despite how they feel about each other (or maybe it's because of how they feel). Anyway...*

Steed and Mrs. Peel *is a good book. No point in dilly-dallying around that point. It's well drawn and wonderfully written. The art on the book is by long-standing British fanfave Ian Gibson with a story by Grant Morrison. Both of these creators have turned out a piece of work that reflects everything I ever loved about the television series. The story is quick paced and quirky. It's filled with off-the-wall ideas and definitely-British dark humor. The basic plot revolves around a series of murders tied into a British game by the name of Crown and Anchor. There is also a mysterious sub-plot about a breach in security in Mother(the top-secret organization for which Steed works). The story is a tight mystery filled with odd characters— very true to the original show. I am tempted to call* ***Steed and Mrs. Peel*** *a spy series after all, they do work for a top-secret unknown organization working to fight off world threats—but that term just doesn't seem right to me. I have trouble thinking of James Bond and John Steed in the same manner— Ilya Kuryakin maybe, but not Bond.*

That's probably because The Avengers refused to take the entire spy genre seriously; the show offered a quirky, eccentric, somewhat absurdist view of the entire espionage concept; that was one of its endearing qualities, in fact.

The Avengers is the type of show that has heavily influenced the comics world already. Take, for example, one of the early episodes that featured Steed and Mrs. Peel battling an organization that dressed in old fashioned (and in the women's case, skimpy) clothes and took great pride in the revelry of life, though underneath it all they were trying to take over the world. They called themselves the Hellfire Club... The Avengers well deserve a place in the comics world, and ***Steed and Mrs. Peel #1*** *is an excellent beginning for these characters in comics form. Here's hoping that we can see more of the characters later on!*

I'm not sure if Eclipse has secured the rights to future Avengers-inspired comic book series following ***Steed and Mrs. Peel***, but I certainly hope so. I suspect that there are a great many Avengers fans among the comics talents working in the field--and many of them no doubt have their own ideas for an ***Avengers*** limited series.

Incidentally, you didn't mention one aspect of this limited series that pleased me: like the recent ***Avengers*** trade paperback novel release, ***Steed and Mrs. Peel*** utilizes both Mrs. Peel and Tara King. King's appearance is quite brief, but she is a crucial part of the plotline. Furthermore, the involvement of Mother--a character primarily present in the King episodes--helps to create a stronger bond between the Diana Rigg and the Linda Thorson ***Avengers*** episodes. I'm always happy when a series like this makes full use of the potential of its source material.

Television shows are the only inspirations for adaptation this month; one of the most popular films of the 1960's was ***Planet of the Apes.*** Based on a social satire by Pierre Boulle, ***Planet of the Apes*** was so successful that it inspired a series of films, a series of novels, a television show, and a 1970's comic book series. The only problem was that none of these things were particularly good; at best, the subsequent films were mediocre--and the Marvel series that started off capably enough quickly became a second-string title.

Adventure Comics has managed to avoid this sort of mediocrity in their various ***Planet of the Apes*** projects, however. ***Planet of the Apes*** proved so successful that the miniseries became an ongoing series before it had even hit the stands; the second series, ***Ape City***, was as well done (if not better).

And now we have a third ***Planet of the Apes*** project, ***Urchak's Folly***. This time, Adventure has turned the creative reins over to Australian talent Gary Chaloner; the decision was an astute one, because Chaloner has brought a refreshing viewpoint and an invigorating, dramatic style to the ***Planet of the***

& REVIEWS

Apes concept, giving ***Urcbak's Folly*** the strongest "hit potential" of any ***Planet of the Apes*** book so far.

Sebastian Thorne is a human being stranded in a world where humans are animals and apes are the dominant species. It becomes obvious to the reader that Thorne has no real idea what has happened to make this world so different from his own, nor does he seem to realize exactly how he arrived in such a twisted reality--but he has little time to think about it, since Chaloner embroils him in brutal conflict almost immediately. Scarcely does a confrontation with barbaric, animalistic humans end than a conflict with ape soldiers begin. Events unfold as rapidly for Thorne as they do for the reader, advancing with such speed that you can scarcely believe you've gone through the entire twenty-four pages when you reach the end of the first issue.

Chaloner has done something that all too few comic book writer-artists do: he has told a story in words and shown a story in pictures without merely offering two slightly different forms of the identical tale. Let me clarify: you can just look at the artwork and you'll get a well-crafted, extremely visual story of conflict and confrontation. The story flows on the page so well that you have no trouble following the action. You can read the script and the dialogue and you get an insightful tale of human confusion, a sense of loss, loneliness, wonder, and anxiety that lets the reader get to know Thorne as a person--and to empathize with his plight. Chaloner never lets his script become a text description of what the panel illustrates. Perhaps some other writer-artists should take notes...

*I am impressed. I thought that the original **Planet of the Apes** was good, but Adventure has done nothing but improve upon the series at every turn. **Urcbak's Folly** is the best to date, no doubt about that. Normally, the tendency is for successive mini-series to lose some of the quality that original sets, but this has not happened with the **Planet of the Apes**. **Urcbak's Folly** has such a tightly written story that it almost is hard to believe that you never see the main character speak. Everything that happens in the book, happens through him, yet he never says a word. The reader is given such an open knowledge of the characters thoughts that nothing seems unnatural. I had to go back after reading this book the first time and make sure that I was not crazy, but the main character never speaks. Chaloner's writing style is so natural that the reader never misses the character's dialogue, or lack thereof. Truly impressive.*

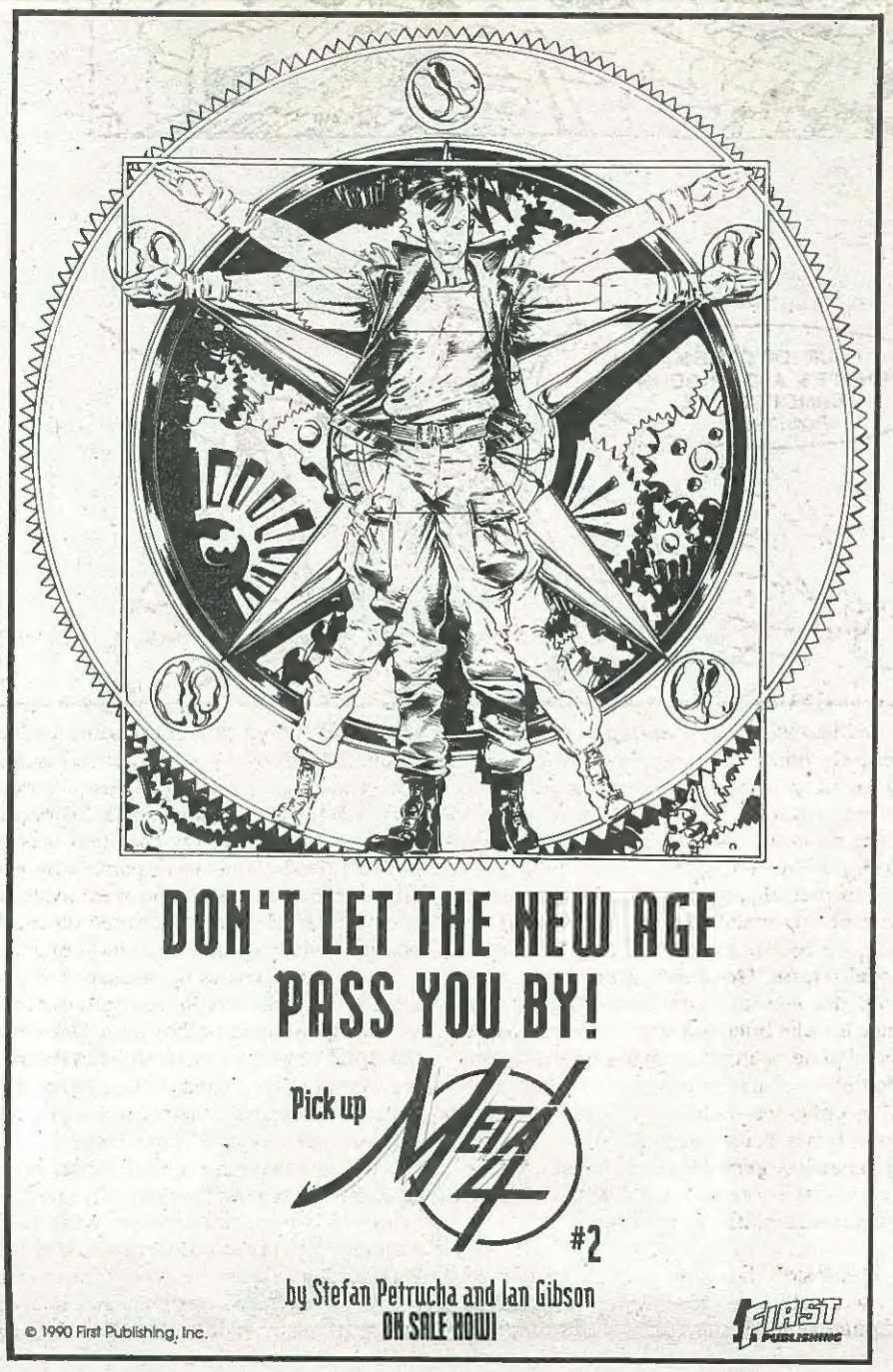
Equally impressive isChaloner's artwork, which has never looked this good. He has always had a strong style, but his figures have a fluidity and grace in this story that hasn't been revealed in his earier work. He really shines, though, in his rendition of the apes; these are massive, powerful creatures, each instilled with a visual personality. Many artists can't give their human characters the degree of individuality that Chaloner gives his apes. Dillon Naylor's inks are smooth and controlled, bringing out the best in the pencils; if Naylor is also responsible for the zipatone, he deserves kudos for that aspect of the art as well, because the zipatone accents th art in ***Urcbak's Folly*** without burying it.

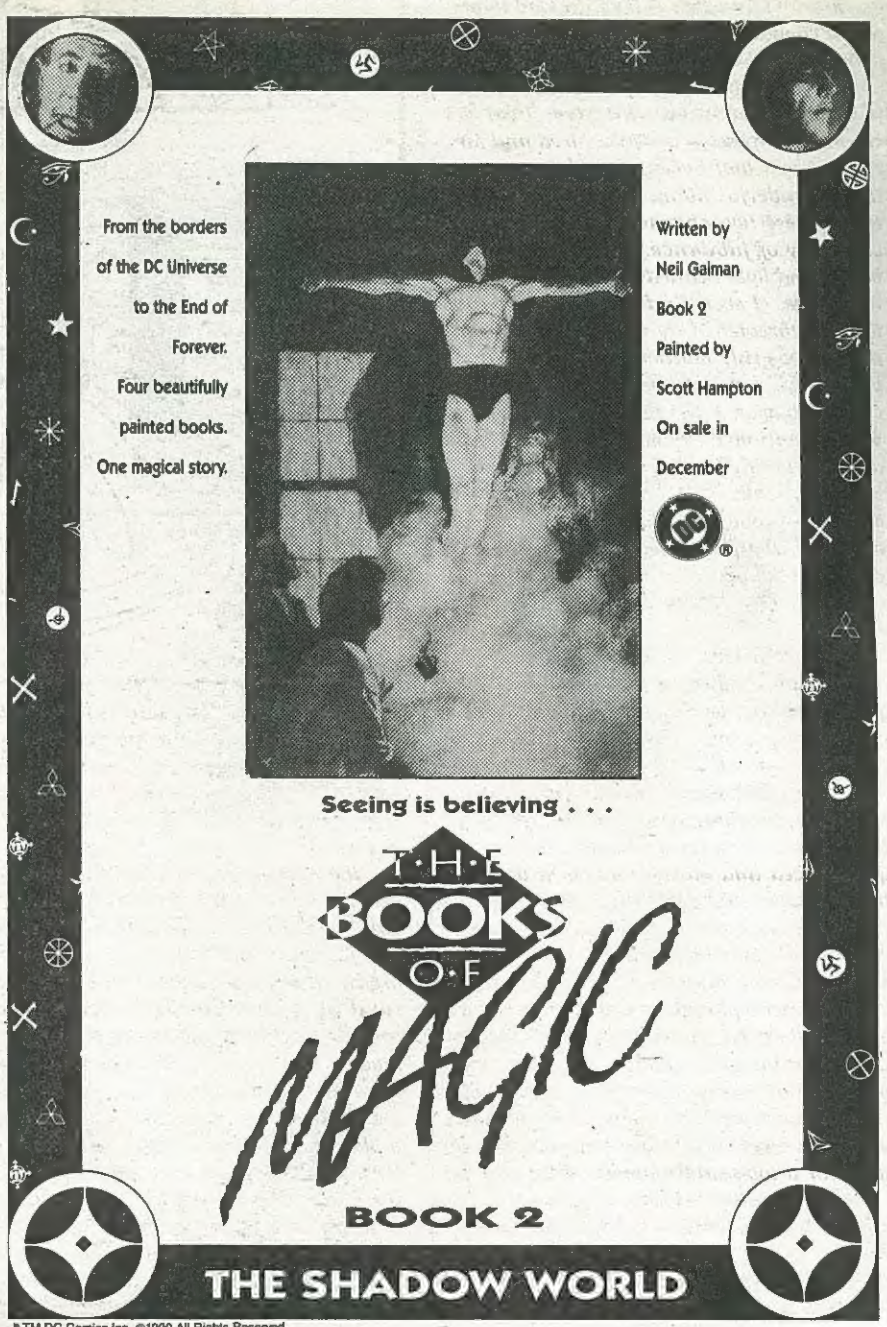
Chaloner definitly has the potential to discover a following in the United States. His writing ability is proof enough of that, but his art is at it's peak as well. Gary Chaloner is in the working on a project for Epic comics, and I can see why. Anybody who thinks that the art on this book is going to look "just like every other independent" is wrong. Chaloner has a simple style, but he conveys a great deal of emotion in his line. I agree that the peak of his art on this book is the apes; the fear that these beasts are supposed to instill becomes very clear with Chaloner's interpretation.

When I say that ***Urcbak's Folly*** is the best ***Planet of the Apes*** series to have appeared in comics thus far, I'm not speaking in hyperbole; it surpasses the previous Adventure series (all of which have been very entertaining) and the best of the Marvel ***Planet of the Apes*** books (the Mike Ploog issues, of course). Chaloner has always been an entertaining artist and writer--but ***Urcbak's Folly*** shows that he has real star potential.

*I like **Urcbak's Folly** very much. It shows some of the possibilities that can be explored in the concept of taking a movie, or TV show, or anything, one step further than it has been before.*

When I was seven years old, the ***Challengers of the Unknown*** was one of my favorite comic books. The concept fascinated





CSN PREVIEWS

me, just as DC's ***Blackhawks*** did (in my mind, the two were inextricably linked). Both teams were made up of human beings will human limitations; both used technology to assist them; and both teams had costumes that looked like real clothes. Okay, so the third reason is somehow less important now than the other two; it seemed *vitally* important when I was seven, perhaps because no matter how good those supersuits worn by other heroes looked, I'd never be able to rig up a suitable facsimile...

I remember the ***Challengers*** best as they appeared in the Bob Brown-illustrated issues of the early and mid 1960's, prior to the later-60s attempts to revitalize the characters and bring them more in line with the superhero universe. It wasn't until several years later that I was able to mine the motherlode of Jack Kirby ***Challengers*** and see how much these human heroes had in common with the early heroes of the Marvel line. Like many of the Marvel heroes, the ***Challengers*** seemed to have their roots in the adventure-mystery-suspense titles; these characters always seemed to operate in a darker world than did the other DC heroes, and their exploits seemed to have more in common with 1950's science fiction films (which seemed to be a stylistic inspiration for Marvel and DC's mystery-suspense titles like ***My Greatest Adventure, Tales of Suspense***, etc.) than with the universe populated by Superman, Flash, Batman, and other DC heroes.

Jeph Loeb, the writer responsible for bringing back the Challenger of the Unknown in a new eight-issue limited series, seems to recognize that the ***Challengers*** were lesser luminaries in the DC heavens. As one of the characters in Loeb's script tells readers, "The [Daily] Planet's got Superman. You know how he sells papers. ***Tattletale*** [a weekly tabloid]? We've got Challengers of the Unknown. Only difference is--Superman gets into some pretty newsworthy stories. The 'Chals'--as much as I adore them--aren't exactly on everyone's mind--if you know what I mean. Look, the Challengers have been around for more than twenty years. Since that time, the public has discovered Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman-- a lot of competition for us. And when was the last time the Challengers saved the universe? Or saved anything, for that matter?..."

And there you have it--in a nutshell, that brief tells me that Jeph Loeb and I perceive the ***Challengers of the Uknown*** in much the same way. If superheroes were television sta-

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& REVIEWS

tions, the Challengers would definitely be non-network UHF...

*I discovered the **Challengers of the Unknown** a little later than you did (natural, assuming the difference in our ages), but I quickly fell in with them nevertheless. There's something about this group. Four men living on borrowed time. That phrase still gets me excited. It always seemed as though the Challengers were living an adventure by just living. I like your comparison to television UHF, but I think that maybe PBS is more accurate, or maybe the Discover Channel— after all, there never is any adventure on UHF channels, just reruns. I also like the way you compare the **Challengers** to the early Marvel books. For me the **Challengers of the Unknown** are inextricably linked to the **Fantastic Four**, but obviously not for the same reasons.*

Loeb's ***Challengers of the Unknown*** doesn't deny the existence of all those Challengers adventures that I remember so fondly. It merely says that perhaps they didn't happen exactly the way the comics told us. In fact, perhaps they didn't happen at all. Many of those adventures might be nothing more than clever works of fiction build around the Challengers legend.

In this new series, the Challengers are four men and a woman who have turned their heroic deeds into financial security. They've sold their adventures to publishers, they've built a theme park around the Challengers motif, they sell t-shirts, they license merchandising-- but at the core, there's still a little bit of the dissatisfied hero, the Odysseus longing for new adventures.

In ***Challengers of the Unknown,*** Loeb gives them a new adventure all right--but they may not want it. Prof and June are lost in an explosion in Challengers Mountain--an explosion that kills hundreds of innocents and makes the Challengers pariahs and accused criminals. Loeb (and artist Tim Sale, whose low-key, more personal style breaks with the ***Challengers'*** artistic past in the same way that Loeb's script breaks with their legend) follows the Challengers as they attempt to clear their names and find out just what went wrong.

As a longtime ***Challengers*** fan, I came to this new limited series with mixed feelings. At first I bristled against the humanization of the Challengers; once I read the first issue, though, I could see that Loeb's intentions strike at the core of what the Challengers of the Unknown are: people living on borrowed time, making the most of each day. And in spite of my initial trepidations, I'm eager to see just what Loeb does in the remainder of the series.

Like you, I too was very trepidatious about the new series, but I feel better now (thank you). Jeph Loebs does an interesting job interpreting the characters. At first, when I read the plot synopsis, I thought that the Challengers were going to lose all of the qualities that made them special, but that's not so. Loeb's has merely re-assigned what makes these people special. If it didn't seem so clichéd, I would just call this "a gritty updating for the nineties," but that doesn't describe what this is. Loeb's has almost re-created the Challengers without losing sight of what they once were. It reminds me more of what was done to characters like the Flash in the Silver Age, but not to the same extreme. It's difficult to describe.

*I hope that people give the **Challengers of the Unknown** a try. It's a different book on a shelf of re-hashed ideas. I think that people could find themselves enjoying the idea of the Challengers more than they might think. I also hope that DC might decide to use this book as a lead in to a reprinting of those old Kirby **Challengers** stories (I hope, I hope).*

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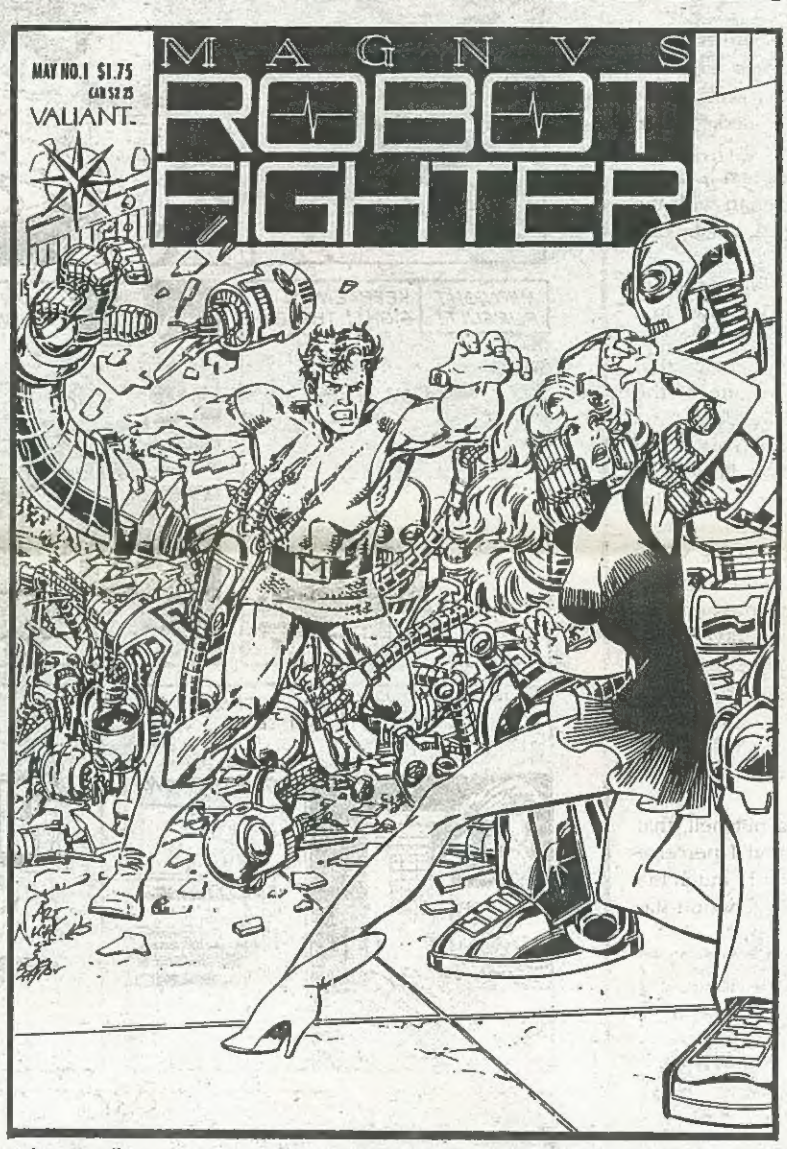

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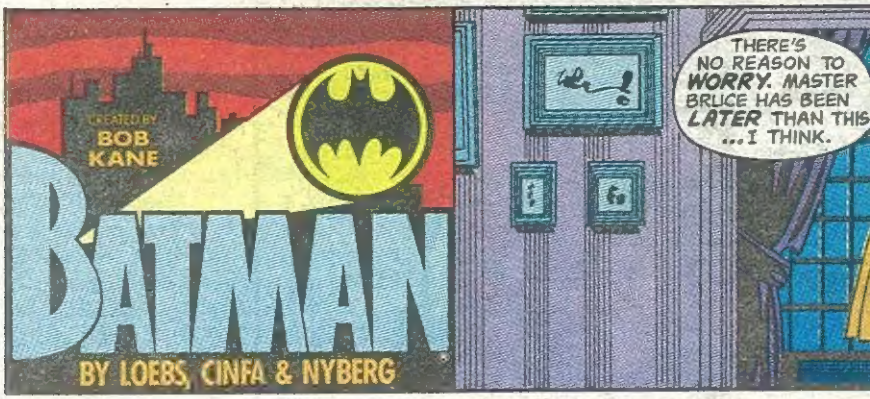
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HMM. BAT-LINES, BATARANGS, SMOKE BOMBS... NOTHING HERE.

BUT WHERE WOULD YOU KEEP IT...?

YES! I WAS RIGHT!

I KNO
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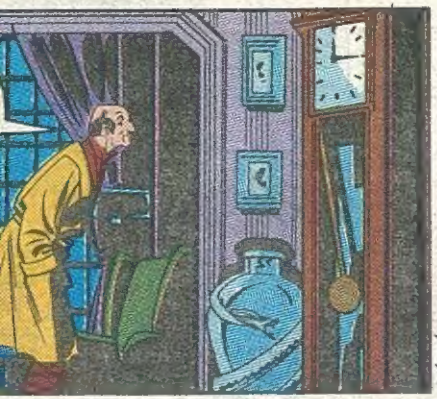

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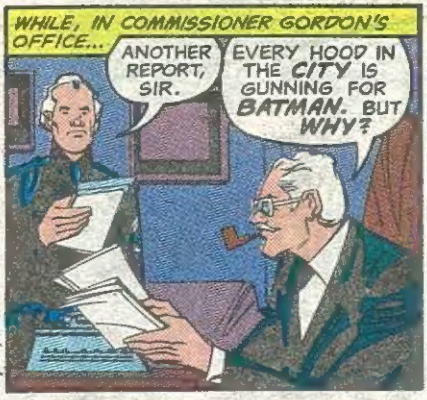

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